



FAR NORTH

Cool choices

Boutique lodges offer upscale views of Alaska

By ANNE Z. COOKE
Special Contributor

Alaska's privately owned wilderness lodges are family-owned boutique properties, offering the traveler an inside look at life in Alaska.

The owner's interests determine the character of the lodge; the activities and adventures they offer will also depend on the location.

Boutique lodges are expensive, even the less-expensive ones. The lodges described here range from full-service properties to homespun chalets. Generally, prices reflect the age of the lodge, service levels, cuisine, sports gear and extras such as gear drying rooms, spa services and hot tubs.

Full-service lodges

Crystal Creek Lodge, a luxury log lodge on the Naknek River, at the west end of Katmai National Park, is open from early June to October. All-inclusive vacations include guided salmon and trout fishing, flight-seeing, wildlife-watching and hunting. The lodge accommodates a maximum of 14 guests in double rooms with private baths. Average daily rate per person for a six-day, seven-night stay is \$1,285 in August (\$8,350 for the week). Shorter visits can be arranged.

907-357-3153; www.crystalcreeklodge.com

Winterlake Lodge, a fly-in luxury lodge on remote Winter Lake, 195 miles from Anchorage, is near the Iditarod Trail in the Alaska Range foothills. All-inclusive summer and winter vacations offer guided glacier flights, fly-fishing, Iditarod Trail hikes, kayaking, cooking classes, canoeing,

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From an icebreaker, passengers venture onto sea ice.

Arctic cruises icy, remote land

Special Contributor

The Arctic may be getting warmer, but it still offers a respite from summer heat.

Expedition cruises, rarities a decade ago, now cover almost every corner of a vast, icy realm previously known only to explorers and Inuit. Most voyages take place in late summer, when sea ice is minimal.

The geography is splendid: landscapes of islands, mountains and ice. The wildlife is marvelous: walrus, seals, narwhals, whales, sea birds and, of course, polar bears.

Inuit culture thrives in remote villages, and passengers track through fascinating history, sailing where intrepid Europeans often

perished passages

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Within the Wild

Winterlake Lodge overlooks Winter Lake, about 200 miles from Anchorage, Alaska.

Alaska lodges: a civilized way to see the wilderness

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dog-sledding and Nordic skiing. The lodge takes up to 14 guests in seven double cabins, each with private bath. Children 12 and older are welcome. Average daily rate per person is \$965 (\$3,860 for a four-day, four-night stay).

907-274-2710;
www.withinthewild.com

Boardwalk Lodge, a fly-in luxury fishing lodge on Prince of Wales Island, near Ketchikan, in southeastern Alaska, is open from mid-May through September. All-inclusive vacations specialize in salmon and halibut fishing in the Inside Passage. Other activities include wildlife-watching, sea kayaking, fly-fishing, hiking, cave exploration and biking. The lodge accommodates up to 24 guests in 12 double rooms with private baths. Children 12 and older are welcome. Average daily rate per person is \$1,248 (\$4,995 for a four-day, four-night stay).

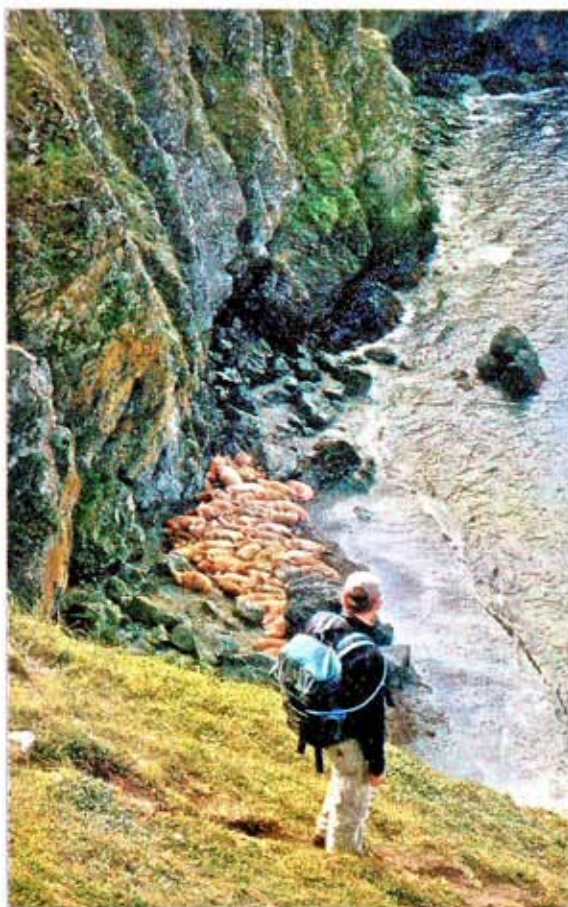
1-800-764-3918;
www.boardwalklodge.com

Middle-range lodges

Tutka Bay Lodge, a luxury wilderness lodge near Kachemak Bay State Park, is open from early May through September. New owners Carl and Kirsten Dixon (owners of Winter Lake Lodge) emphasize service, fine food, bird-watching, fjord exploration, sea kayaking, hiking, mountain biking, fly-fishing and saltwater fishing. Cooking classes, yoga and spa treatments are planned. The lodge accommodates up to 25 guests in six double cabins, each with a private bath. Children are welcome. Average daily rate per person is \$842 (based on \$3,365 for a four-day, four-night stay).

907-274-2710;
www.withinthewild.com

Riversong Lodge, a fly-in



Steve Haggerty

A hiking tour takes a visitor past a protected haul-out for napping walrus on the Bristol Bay coast near Togiak.

rambling log lodge on the Yentna River, 70 miles west of Anchorage, is open from mid-May to mid-September. Vacations focus on guided fishing for trout, arctic grayling and salmon. The lodge accommodates up to 25 guests in 10 rustic cabins. Six cabins have private baths; four share a shower house. Children are welcome. Beer, wine and soft drinks aren't included. Average daily rate per person is \$752.50 (\$3,010 for a four-day, four-night stay). Younger than 4, free.

907-350-2392;
www.riversonglodge.com

Silver Salmon Creek Lodge, a comfortable fly-in lodge in Clark Lake National Park, is west of the Kenai Peninsula. All-inclusive vacations focus on bear- and bird-watching, nature photography, fly-fishing and kayaking. The lodge accommodates up to 16 guests in double rooms in the lodge and in rustic double cabins. Children 10 and older are welcome. Average daily rate per person is \$725 (\$2,900 for four nights).

1-888-872-5666;
www.silversalmoncreek.com

Togiak River Lodge, a fly-in, fishing-only lodge on

the Togiak River, is 55 miles west of Dillingham. Partly-inclusive vacations focus on fly and reel fishing in the Togiak River for salmon, trout and arctic char. The lodge accommodates up to 12 guests in modest double rooms, each with a private bath. Fishing gear and round-trip float-plane transportation from Dillingham aren't included. Average daily rate per person is \$750 (\$3,000 for four days).

P.O. Box 350, Togiak, AK 99678;
www.togiaklodge.com

Value lodges

North Face and Camp Denali lodges, private lodges inside Denali National Park, are 90 miles from the park entrance, in sight of Mount McKinley. Owned by the Cole family, the two lodges, less than a mile apart, offer all-inclusive stays for active guests interested in experiencing the tundra ecology firsthand. Included are guided naturalist walks and hikes, birding and use of sports gear. Historic Camp Denali has a central lodge where meals are served and 18 cabins. Modern bathrooms and showers are nearby. North Face Lodge, a newer building, has 15 rooms, each with a private bath. Children are welcome. Average daily rate per person is \$475 (based on \$1,900 for a four-night stay).

www.campdenali.com

Sadie Cove Wilderness Lodge, inside Kachemak Bay State Park, is accessible from Homer by boat. Partly-inclusive vacations include owner-guided ecology tours on private trails, hikes to alpine valleys and the Harding Ice Field, clamming, beachcombing, kayaking, fishing and birding. Optional activities such as bear-watching and flight-seeing can be arranged. The lodge is wind- and water-powered. A maximum of 10



Within the Wild

Tourists dine on fresh oysters and wine on the deck at Tutka Bay Lodge, near Kachemak Bay State Park.

guests stay in five double cabins, each with a private bath. Children are welcome. Round-trip water taxi from Homer (\$125 per person) is extra. Average daily rate per person is \$425 (more through agency or charge card).

1-888-283-7234; sadiecovelodge.com

Ridgewood Wilderness Lodge, near Kachemak Bay State Park, is accessible from Homer by motorboat. Partly inclusive vacations include guided hikes to nearby glaciers, an all-day Kachemak Bay

marine tour, beachcombing, kayaking and fishing. Optional activities include flight-seeing and bear-watching. The lodge accommodates up to eight guests in four double rooms, each with private bath. Children are welcome. Average daily rate per person is \$375 when paid by cash or check.

907-296-2217;
www.ridgewoodlodge.com

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BETSY BOCK/Staff Artist